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Approved For Release 2003/08/05 : CIA-RDP78-04718A001600100053-7
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF DEFENSE MOBILIZATION
Washington 25, D C

Executive Registry
7-0985

June 2, 1955

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TO THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

Subject: Status of Activation of Relocation Sites and Planning
for Operation Alert 1955.

It is encouraging to note the progress made to date by the various Executive Departments and Agencies in activating their respective emergency relocation sites and in effecting plans for operational readiness during the test period. However, the following comments stem from recent observations of the activation of agencies' relocation sites in preparation for Operation Alert 1955. The purpose in bringing these to your attention is to assist your personnel to achieve as high a level of readiness and efficiency as possible. In general the surveys thus far indicate varying degrees of readiness and understanding. I know you will agree that it is important for each agency to achieve a uniformity of site capacity of preparedness to meet agency needs and interagency coordination in the event that a real emergency occurs, as well as to test our readiness to meet simulated disaster conditions. Not all of the following observations are equally applicable to or pertinent to individual agencies and some discrepancies have been remedied during the interim.

The major need is for agencies to ensure that personnel designated to participate in Operation Alert 1955 are thoroughly indoctrinated and have a clear understanding of the problem assumptions involved. They should also, to the extent necessary, be informed of what constitutes the agency's essential wartime functions and know how to test their operational effectiveness. In addition, those who "need to know" should be made aware of agency emergency plans, including provisions for succession of command and other details which several agencies have included in a "Manual of Operations."

Persons sent to the relocation site for duty prior to Operation Alert 1955 who have not clearly understood their assigned duties have appeared to assume that they are simply caretakers. However, practically all appeared interested and willing to participate.

Personnel should also be informed of the necessary records and "logs" to be maintained during their tour of duty, as well as, their responsibility to be readily available as would be necessary in the event of a real alert. This necessitates creating an attitude among those participating that "it could happen here" and that the pre-alert and actual alert activities are not simply "paper" drills. Personnel should also be further encouraged to submit, through proper channels, their observations, comments, and criticisms, based on their thinking out the problems, as it has been noted that specific problems have been well identified.

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In general, the surveys indicate that frequently security measures are either "overdone" or "underdone." It is realized that satisfactory physical security is difficult to achieve in temporary and, in most instances, non-federal properties designated for relocation sites, yet every effort should be made to identify visitors entering the relocation sites prior to their admittance, including maintenance or repair personnel particularly if these latter workers are not government employees. This should, however, be done tactfully so as not to create an air of undue mystery which only serves to excite inordinate curiosity.

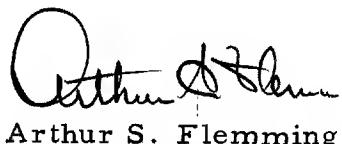
A greater familiarity with communications equipment and procedures needs to be attained prior to Operation Alert 1955. Attention should therefore be given to establishing ground rules for problem play and control with respect to message priorities as well as instructing personnel in proper techniques and usage of equipment. There has seemed to be a reluctance or hesitancy of relocatees to utilize communications during the pre-alert period. If pre-testing is accomplished during the pre-alert phase with a view to determining capability and capacity then communication failure affecting other agencies may well be avoided during Operation Alert 1955.

In some instances it appears that insufficient staff has been allocated to work out the necessary administrative support or "backup" to the substantive phase of Operation Alert 1955. Specifically, increased attention should be given to ensuring that personnel know their contemplated assignments, know what is expected of them, and what they might expect with respect to lodging, berthing, messing, fire safety, final policing of area, and proper clearance with officials having jurisdiction over site quarters.

Another element noted that needs attention is providing clear and precise instructions as to what to do in event of actual emergencies, accidents or illness of persons during their tour of duty in the pre-test period or during Operation Alert 1955.

A special committee of the Interagency Planning Group is available for individual or general conference for further information, guidance, and assistance, on emergency relocation site activation and operational planning.

An informal and provocative type of general check list on relocation site data, being issued, telescopes many of the varied "need to know" or "need to coordinate" items applicable to one or all of the relocation sites. It is hoped that a "soul-searching" review of these items will be as useful to you as they have been to ODM in arriving at Alert Hour fully prepared to handle all phases of Operation Alert 1955.


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Director